**Reila Bird-Duesing Chapter 3 & 4 Response May 15th, 2009**

**Part One**:

**What is the difference between Objectivist** & **Subjectivist Epistemology?** (p.60)

**Objectivist**

* Requires that evaluation be “scientifically objective”
* Uses data collection and analysis techniques
* Evaluation are “externalized”

**Subjectivist**

* Validity claims on “an appeal to experience rather than to scientific method”.
* Validity depends on the relevance of the evaluator’s background and qualifications.
* Evaluation procedures are “internalized” existing largely within the evaluator.

**What is the difference between Utilitarian & Intuitionist-Pluralist Evaluation?** (p.62)

**Utilitarian**

* Determine value by assessing the overall impact of the program on those affected.
* Accepts the value premise that the greatest good is that which will benefit the greatest number of individuals.

**Intuitionist-Pluralist**

* Value depends on the impact of the program on each individual.
* The value position is that the greatest good requires attention to each individual’s benefit.

**What are some examples of metaphors of evaluation?** (p.65)

* Investigative journalism; storytelling; philosophical analysis; literary criticism

**Why consider evaluation metaphors?** (p.65)

* Much of our everyday thinking is metaphorical and extends that point to argue that evaluation is also largely metaphorical.

**What are the practical considerations?** (p.66-67)

1. Evaluators may disagree about the intent of the evaluation.
2. Evaluators differ in their general view of the political roles of evaluation.
3. Evaluators are influenced by their prior experience.
4. Evaluators differ in their views about who should conduct the evaluation and the nature of expertise they must possess.

**What are the five categories for evaluation approaches?** (p.68)

1. Objectives-Orientated Approaches
2. Management-Orientated Approaches
3. Consumer-Orientated Approaches
4. Expertise-Orientated Approaches
5. Participant-Orientated Approaches

**What are the various Objectives-Orientated Evaluation Approaches**?

* The purposes of some activity are specified, and then evaluation focuses on the extent to which those purposes are achieved.
* Information gained can be used to reformulate the purposes of the activity, the activity itself, or the assessment procedures and devices used to determine the achievement of purposes. (p.71)

**The Tylerian Evaluation Approach** (p.72)

* Developed during an eight year period of the late1930’s
* The use of goals to establish a purpose
* Interested in improving education, but applies to services in other sectors as well
* Established six categories for American Schools

**Metfessel and Michael’s Evaluation Plan** (p.74)

* Influenced by Tylerian tradition
* Developed the eight steps in the evaluation process
* Primary contribution was enlarging the education evaluator’s vision of alternative instruments that might be used for data collection

**Provus’s Discrepancy Evaluation Model** (p.75)

* Viewed evaluation as a continuous information-management process designed to serve as the “watchdog” and the “hand-maiden” of administration
* As a program is being developed it goes through four developmental stages: definition, installation, process, and product. Cost benefit analysis is optional.

**What is the Evaluation Cube?** (p.77)

* is a 3 dimensional model framework for analyzing programs where each cell of the cube will provide a checklist for making certain that important areas or categories of objectives are not overlooked.

**What are logic models?** (p.79)

* Starts with a long term vision of how program participant will be better off (changed).
* This is seen as the ultimate program goal.
* The outcome is than placed on a timeline for improvement.
* What do we have to do to reach these annual goals? Inputs, activities, outputs

**Why is it important to know program theory?** (p.79)

* Useful to evaluators in helping them learn more about how the program is intended to work and identifying aspects of the program that bear scrutiny.
* This help focus the evaluation equations on how well one aspect is done, how adequate each aspect is, the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect, and changes in each aspect that might improve the program in some way.

**What is Goal –Free Evaluation?** (p.84)

* Goal to reduce bias and increase objectivity.
* The evaluator purposefully avoids becoming aware of the program goals.
* Predetermined goals are not permitted to narrow the focus.
* Focuses on actual outcomes rather than intended program outcomes.
* The evaluator has minimal contact with the program manager and staff.
* The evaluation increases the likelihood that unanticipated side effects will be noted.

**Part Two:**

Chapter three opened up my eyes to the diverse nature of program evaluation. I am astonished at the many views and approaches. I understand that the definition of program evaluation can take on many forms, however, how does an evaluator truly know what approach would be the most effective? Perhaps the answer to that question is a result of responding to different needs. “The evaluators must learn about each context and adapt the evaluation to it to be successful in meeting the needs of each audience” (p.66). Yet, I wonder if there a more effective and valid approach than another.

The notion of “meeting the needs of the audience” echoes an eerie resemblance to the differentiated instructional approach to teaching where “one size does not fit all”. For instance, as a teacher I am expected to meet the needs of all my students in order to increase student achievement. I, therefore, have to somehow evaluate student learning. In order to do so, I may choose to evaluate student learning soley through testing. My colleague, on the other hand, may choose to evaluate a variety of material using specific tools in order to produce a grade/percent. Some of that material may be in the form of tests, assignment, projects, and classroom participation. Whose approach is more effective and valid? My quantitative approach or my colleague’s qualitative approach? I would argue that the approach has to match the needs of the student, curriculum objectives and the teaching philosophy of the teacher, so neither is more effective or valid. However, on numerous occasions I’ve sat around a table with colleagues discussing the concepts of student achievement and evaluation and it was clear that everyone had their own approach and opinions about what should and should not be evaluated and how to go about it.

Chapter four was an excellent overview of the Objectives-Orientated Evaluation Approach. Although I found many of the evaluation approaches interesting, the one approach that I would like to learn more about is the Evaluation Cube. The three-dimensional framework is a unique way to approach program evaluation, however there was not enough detailed information about how it works to give me a clear understanding of its effectiveness. Needless to say, I was left wondering how I could use that model in my teaching practices or in general. The model that I am most familiar with is the Logical Model. This model seems to be the one that my previous school division used the most when evaluating programs. It is also a model that can easily be adapted to a school or classroom setting.

As I read the chapter, I found myself making numerous connections to educational evaluation where we use curricular objectives/outcomes to measure student learning. Such evaluations include, but not limited to, provincial and division writing and reading benchmarks, provincial and division math assessments, and the Canadian Achievement Test. Thus, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has an Assessment for Learning (AFL) unit which “monitors and reports on curriculum implementation, student learning and the K-12 school environment in which they occur. These activities are undertaken with a view to improve programs and professional practice and inform policy and decision making for the good and equitable education of all Saskatchewan students” (<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Assessment-for-Learning>). As an educator I believe that the AFL’s purpose has the potential to make an impact on curriculum development, programming and policy, however I also believe that AFL does not take into consideration the many familial and societal factors which directly affect student achievement. I found it ironic that the Tylerian Evaluation Approach, which was developed in the 1930’s, paved the way for a more holistic approach school evaluations. Goodlad (1979) said that, “It should be clear that a single standardized test of achievement of basic skills, or standards-based test, provides insufficient data to evaluate our schools. Yet the use of test results today is still the most common form of evaluation discussed in the popular media today” (p.73). Isn’t it interesting that thirty years later our educational system continues to use standardized test scores to evaluate student achievement in our schools despite the numerous objections from stakeholders?

It is apparent that the Objectives-Orientated Evaluation Approach has many strengths and limitations, however, I would agree that it is a simple process which is easy to understand and implement. It produces information that is relevant and it forces program managers/ administrators to reflect and clarify outcomes. I would rather see a program evaluated on their goals/objectives rather than on a quantitative data that does not reflect the whole picture. Additionally, I am not convinced by the Goal-Free evaluation approach which argues that when “...an evaluator is told the goals of the program and is therefore immediately limited in her perceptions –the goals acts as blinders, causing her to miss important outcomes not directly related to those goals” (p.84). I find it difficult to imagine a program evaluation without knowing the goals/objectives up front. Therefore, I question how effective the Goal-Free Evaluation Approach truly is and will read more about it in the recommended readings.